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ABSTRACT

This document contains a brief bibliography of peer-reviewed literature, with abstracts, on aging parents. It is one of 12 bibliographies on aging prepared by the National Agricultural Library for its "Pathfinders" series of publications. Topics covered by the other 11 bibliographies include adult children, dementia and Alzheimer's disease in the elderly (written for educators), dementia and Alzheimer's disease in the elderly (written for consumers), family caregiving, family support networks, grandparenting, humor in later life, intergenerational relationships, living arrangements in later life, pets and the elderly, and sibling relationships in adulthood. This bibliography on aging parents contains citations for 17 books and articles for researchers and educators, and 19 books and articles for consumers. It concludes with a list of organizations that readers may contact for further assistance. (NB)

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FEBRUARY 1990

AGING PARENTS

PREPARED BY BILLIE H. FRAZIER, Ph.D., CFLE**

This PATHFINDER has been prepared to help researchers, educators and consumers better understand aging parents in the context of today's family life.

RESEARCHER/EDUCATOR

Aging and the Family, Stephen J. Bahr and Evan T. Peterson. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989.

The authors of this book examines aging from a family perspective. They assess the current state of knowledge and present new data in the areas of transitions, family relationships, health, and economic well-being.

"Aging-Fathers' and Aging-Mothers' Perceptions of Relationships With Their Adult-Children." Dissertation Abstracts International, 48(01):223-224, July 1987.

Relationships between healthy aging-fathers and aging-mothers and their offspring are investigated. In the findings, it was indicated that parents talk about relationships with their child along four dimensions: gender of child; physical/psychological presence; functional solidarity; and temporal orientation. Parents report experiencing considerable stress when their children have problems. Negative parent-child relationships are characterized by poor communication and low levels of intimacy. There are gender differences in how aging-parents relate to their adult children.

CG 022489

This PATHFINDER lists significant resources that are judged to be accurate, readable, and available. Opinions expressed in the publication do not reflect views of the United States Department of Agriculture.

GPO 907-729

"Aging Parents and Adult Children: Research Themes in Intergenerational Relations," Jay A. Mancini and Rosemary Blieszner. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51(2):275-290, May 1989.

Dominant themes concerning relationships of older parents and their adult children are discussed. Roles and responsibilities, parent-child interaction (contact patterns, exchange, assistance, support), individual well-being, relationship quality, and caregiving by adult children are included.

"Aging Parents as Family Resources," Jan S. Greenberg and Marion Becker. The Gerontologist, 28(6):786-791, 1988.

The extent to which aging parents experience stress when problems arise in the lives of their adult children and the ways in which parents serve as resources to their children are studied. According to the results, mothers experience significant stress as a result of their adult children's problems, whereas fathers experience it indirectly through their wives. These parents are actively involved in helping their adult children cope, especially when the situation involves the loss of a family member.

"Building Family Strengths," Nick Stinnett, Barbara Chesser and John DeFain. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

A couple of articles in this book relate to aging parents. In "Enjoying Your Aging Parents," the author suggests that greater knowledge between generations can be a key to building family strengths. Readers are challenged to think about the kind of personal relationship that exists with parents. Another article, "Relationship Quality of Older Parents and Their Offspring," reveals that the quality of parent-child relationships is positively related to life satisfaction for older parents. Consequently, educational programs to strengthen the quality of parent-offspring relationships in later life are encouraged.

"Differential Respite Needs of Aging Parents of Individuals with Mental Retardation," Victoria DeFilippo Lutzer and Timothy H. Brubaker. Mental Retardation, 26(1):13-15, February 1988.

In the results of this study, it was indicated that parents of persons with mental retardation differ in their need for types of respite care according to age. Parents over age 56 report less need for respite services, parent cooperative sitting arrangements, and training for family members.

"Family Contributions of Older Persons," Gregory F. Sanders. Activities, Adaptation and Aging, 11(1):53-60, 1988.

The researcher investigates contributions of the elderly to their family and related demographic factors. In his findings, it was indicated that the most typical contribution is financial assistance which does not differ by age. Those who give financial help, companionship, help with worries, and gifts have received more education than those who do not give in these areas. Occupational prestige is related only to financial help.

"Financial Assistance from Elderly Retirement-Age Sons to Their Aging Parents," Karen Seccombe. Research on Aging, 10(1):102-118, March 1988.

The author of this study explores the extent and predictors of financial support made by retirement-age sons to their parents who are members of the oldest-old cohort. From a sample of males, aged 65 and over, 13% report making a financial contribution to the support of an aging parent. Frequency of intergenerational interaction is found to be a predictor of parental support.

"Motivators and Inhibitors of Attitudes of Filial Obligation Toward Aging Parents," Nancy J. Finley, M. Diane Roberts and Benjamin F. Banahan. The Gerontologist, 28(1) 73-78, 1988.

The authors of this study found that the feeling of obligation is not simply a product of affection. The degree of obligation is also explained by structural and demographic factors such as distance and role conflict. Filial obligation varies according to parent type (mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law) and gender of the adult child.

"Parental Aging: Clinical Issues in Adult Psychotherapy," Sharon B. Shaw. Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work, 68(7):406-412, 1987.

In this article, family systems, developmental theories, and knowledge about the aging process are integrated in a discussion of the impact of aging parents on adult family members. Professionals need to be sensitive to conflicts experienced by adult children of aging parents.

Parenting Across the Life Span: Biosocial Dimensions, Jane B. Lancaster, Jeanne Altmann, Alice S. Rossi and Lonnie R. Sherrod (eds.). New York, NY: Aldenide Gruyter, 1987.

The authors of this book examine parenthood as a lifelong commitment, how it changes over time, and the impact of changes on parental and child's behavior. Chapters related to aging parents include: "Parent-Child Relations in Later Life," and "Parenting, Grandparenting and Intergenerational Continuity."

"The Quality of Relationships Between Elderly Parents and Their Out-of-Town Children," Miriam S. Moss, Sidney Z. Moss and Elizabeth L. Moles. The Gerontologist, 25(2):134-140, 1985.

Geographic distance often plays a role in the quality of parent-child relationships. The authors of this article review research findings, present exploratory analyses of two research projects, and organize key concepts regarding the relationship of the distant child and elderly parents. Considerable evidence indicates that a broad normative bond persists over distance, as both parent and child are involved in family structure, associations, affections, values, and functional exchanges in maintaining a family bond.

"Reunion Between Elderly Parents and Distance Children," Miriam S. Moss and Sidney Z. Moss. American Behavioral Scientist, 31(6):654-668, July/August 1988.

Several basic themes in reunion-stability and change, autonomy and dependence, and wanting and fearing are explored in this publication to shed additional light on the quality of the relationship in the elderly parent-adult child dyad. Four major themes intrinsic to the bond emerge: continuity, stress, link to the family, and separation. The authors suggest that the more one learns about the structure, content, and quality of reunions, the more one can understand parent-child relationships.

"Role Reversal of the Elderly: Intervention and Prevention," Donald G. Sukosky. Family Life Educator, 6(1):14-17, Fall 1987.

The focus of this article if on role reversal--one form of subtle elder abuse. The author provides: an overview of the concept; a look at the subtle manner in which it occurs; its implications for family functioning; and resources for addressing the problem through family life education. Educators can perform a valuable service by helping people understand that most forms of role reversal may be minimized or prevented.

"Sibling Support and Older Widows' Well-being," Shirley L. O'Bryant. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50(1):173-183, February 1988.

Interview data are collected to investigate the effects of sibling characteristics on widows' receipt of help and on their psychological well-being. Results reveal that sibling support is contingent upon children's proximity and siblings' gender, marital status, and proximity.

"A Study of Middle-Aged Adults and Their Aging Parents in a Suburban Community," Audrey Peck Harris. Dissertation Abstracts International, 36/08/B:3859, 1975.

Relationships between the structure of families headed by middle-aged adults and decisions they make regarding their aged parents are examined. Major findings follow: (1) Large full nest families plan on bringing the aged into the household whereas small empty nest families plan on institutionalization. (2) Families of all types generally do not plan to assist their aged financially. (3) There is a strong relationship between planning to institutionalize and financially assisting when the middle-aged family lives far away from the aged. (4) Most families do discuss, plan, and involve themselves in future activities for aged parents.

"System Characteristics of the Middle-Aged Family and Its Activities on Behalf of Aging Parents. Dissertation Abstracts International, 41/04-A:1796, 1980.

In this study, the author describes the middle-aged family as a support system for its aging parents and compares its characteristics as a system to the amount of help given, willingness to help, and plans regarding future living arrangements. The sample is nonrepresentative and findings cannot be generalized to the entire population, but for the sample studied, the middle-aged family is a viable but limited source of support for its aged. The quality of the relationship between aging parents and offspring is a significant factor and it needs further study.

Aging Parents and Adult Children, Jay A. Mancini. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989.

The focus of this book is on how parents and their mature children interrelate. The author examines the internal dynamics of parent-child relationships and special problems of the relationships. A road map for future research is provided.

Aging Parents and You: A Complete Handbook to Help You Help Your Elders Maintain a Healthy, Productive and Independent Life, Eugenia Anderson-Ellis and Marsha Dryan. New York, NY: MasterMedia Ltd., 1988.

This diverse and informative paperback provides practical strategies to challenges faced in caring for elders. Information is provided on both public and private services. It gives information on how to help elders choose living places and environment; plan financial futures; and enhance health, looks and independence.

Caring for an Aging Parent-Have I Done All I Can?, Avis Jane Ball. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1986.

This is one person's story about facing issues out of a background of responsibility, love, and faith. The author was unable to do everything that she wanted to do. The plight of the disabled elderly and the person who assumes the care of an aged relative commands the reader's attention. Support from neighbors and more community support systems can help to meet a need that is increasing rapidly.

Family After Forty, Barbara W. Davis, Marilyn M. Furry, Maria Ros, Deborah E. Simpkins. University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension, College of Agriculture, 1985.

The authors included six publications designed to help mid-life adults and their parents plan together for the future. Topics covered include giving and receiving, physical well-being, emotional changes, financial concerns, communication skills, and living arrangements.

Do Your Parents Drive You Crazy? A Survival Guide for Adult Children, Janet Dight. New York, NY: Prentice Hall Press, 1987.

This is a book of practical advice designed to let the reader know that almost all adult children have problems with sometimes not-so-adult parents. There is hope. Based on experiences of the author and hundreds of others, this book provides some solutions.

Helping Your Aging Parents, James Halpern. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987.

This book is intended to help the adult child provide support to an aging parent. The author provides advice and insight concerning the emotional issues involved in helping aging parents. Chapter topics include guidelines for helping, the stress of caregiving, your parent as patient, physiological problems, practical concerns, and when a parent moves in.

How to Survive Your Aging Parents So You And They Can Enjoy Life, Bernard H. Shulman and Reann Berman. Chicago, IL: Surrey Books, 1988.

Insights into the tasks related to taking care of aging parents or other relatives are provided. Chapters include: "Who's the Boss?," "Breaking Out of Old, Destructive Patterns," "How to Help Parents Compensate," "How To Talk About Difficult Subjects," "Taking Care Of Yourself As Well As Your Parents," and "Dealing With Confusion and Memory Loss."

Linked Lives: Adult Daughters and Their Mothers, Lucy Rose Fischer. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1986.

The focus of the reported study is on the long enduring and emotionally close relationship between mothers and daughters. A main question centered on the impact of the daughter's motherhood on the mother-daughter relationship. The study sheds light on variability across families and why relationships differ. The book is for people who have a personal or professional interest in the topic of mothers and daughters.

Oh, To Be 50 Again! On Being Too Old For a Mid-Life Crisis, Eda LeShan. New York, NY: Times Books, 1986.

The author takes a straightforward approach and states that when it comes to getting old, we have no choice. It is a fact of life. Old age is full of tough challenges, about courage, about making the choice as to whether or not to be defeated by aging or live out one's remaining years with style. The author's work has been devoted to the idea that human beings have incredible and thrilling potential and that the goal of our lives ought to be to come as close as possible to fulfilling what is so unique and remarkable about each of us.

Parentcare: A Commonsense Guide for Adult Children, Lissy Jarvik and Gary Small. New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1988.

This book is a practical approach to caring for aging parents. The authors present a six step approach to confronting anger, resentment, and stress that often develop. Constrictions of time, financial worries, social stresses, basics of housing and nutrition, finding proper health care, coping with disability and facing death are identified as the greatest problems that emerge. Workable solutions that are mutually beneficial and draw on the strong bond between parents and children are suggested.

"Parents and Children in Later Life," Lillian E. Troll. Generations, 10(4):23-25, Summer 1986.

Family relationships of many older women consist primarily of those with children. The author states that mother-daughter ties are often stronger than mother-son ties. Included in it are discussions of mutual feelings between parents and children throughout life, changes over time, mutual aid, and burden.

"Remember to Ask About Aging Parents," Gerald A. Gill. Mobility, 9(1):38-41, 1988.

Relocation executives will be working more with families who have concerns about aging parents. This author provides suggestions that can assist the family with older parents prepare for a move.

60+: Planning It, Living It, Loving It, Allan Fromme. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984.

Concrete ideas on how to prepare for a change of lifestyle, how to keep marriages healthy, how to accept and enjoy new family roles, how to deal with depression, illness, and death, and generally how to direct lives to avoid being trapped in the past or overwhelmed by the present are presented in the book. The author feels that it is critical for people to plan ahead for the time when working days are behind.

Survival Handbook for Children of Aging Parents, Arthur N. Schwartz. Chicago, Il: Follett Publishing Company, 1988.

The chapters in this book include: "Is It Really Worth It--Growing Older?," "Does Growing Old Mean Dropping Out?," "Retirement--From Termination To Transition," "Institutionalization--When, If Ever?," "Death and Dying--How Do You Handle It?," and "You Are Not On Your Own."

Talking With Your Aging Parents, Mark A. Edinberg. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1987.

An expert in counseling the elderly and their families offers strategies, skills, and support for communicating with older relatives about difficult issues like failing health, legal and financial matters, and family relations.

The Unfinished Business of Living: Helping Aging Parents Help Themselves, Elwood N. Chapman. Los Altos, CA: Crisp Publications, Inc., 1988.

Suggestions are provided to those in the middle generation who deal with children on one hand, and their aging parents on the other. Each chapter concludes with two family studies. They are designed to encourage individual thinking on specific situations.

"What About Mom and Dad?" Laura Elliott. The Washingtonian, 20(6):104-128, March 1985.

As parents get older, housing and health care needs change. The author of this article provides information on what to look for in retirement communities, nursing homes, and in-home care. Sections on coping with emotional and money problems are included.

When Your Parents Grow Old, Jane Otten and Florence D. Shelley. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1988.

This book is written for persons who are wrestling with difficult problems of their parents' old age. Broad categories include: community resources, improving the quality of life, money matters, diseases of the elderly, and a host of other related topics.

Your Aging Parents, Billie H. Frazier. College Park, Maryland: The University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service Leaflet Series #198-#201, 1988-89.

The author addresses concerns about aging parents and other relatives and changing relationships, changes in thinking, physical changes, and emotional changes. Basic developmental information and practical suggestions are provided.

C O N T A C T F O R A S S I S T A N C E

County, Area or State Agency on Aging

County Cooperative Extension Service (under local government in telephone directory)

Family science, psychology, education, human ecology, home economics or aging departments at a state college or university

Local library

American Association of Retired Persons
1909 K. Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20049
(202) 872-4700

American Society on Aging
833 Market Street
Suite 516
San Francisco, CA 94130
(415) 543-2617

Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly
American Bar Association
1800 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 331-2297

National Council on the Aging, Inc.
600 Maryland Avenue, SW
West Wing 100
Washington, D.C. 20024
(202) 479-1200

National Institute on Aging Information Center
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20910
(301) 496-4000

This PATHFINDER resulted from the author's research at the National Agricultural Library while on sabbatical leave from the University of Maryland during the summer and fall of 1989. Using database searches of AGRICOLA, Psycinfo, Social Scisearch, ERIC, Family Resources and Dissertation Abstracts International, references were reviewed and annotated. It is authored by:

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